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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6880
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6971
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 7948
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JUL LIMA 4022
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 9341
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4669
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3607
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHOND/DIRONDCP WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 006255

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2015
TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: MOD OSPINA ASKS SENATOR CORNYN FOR CONTINUED
COUNTERDRUG AND COUNTERTERRORISM ASSISTANCE

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood.
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) and Ambassador Wood met with Minister of Defense (MOD) Camilo Ospina and top military brass July 4. The Colombian security forces presented counternarcotics program successes, and highlighted areas where more could be done with additional U.S. support. Cornyn agreed that increased cooperation was necessary for continued GOC success. End summary.

¶2. (U) Senator John Cornyn and the Ambassador met with Minister of Defense Camilo Ospina on July 3. Minister Ospina was accompanied by Vice Ministers Eastman and Sanin, and the heads of the armed services and police. The Senator and Ambassador were accompanied by Senate staffers, and Embassy staff.

COLOMBIA, U.S. PARTNER IN THE REGION

¶3. (C) Senator Cornyn described Colombia as the "bright light" in the region. He added that the U.S. needs to do all it can to support GOC efforts. He lamented the negative effects of the drug trade in Colombia and the region. Ospina thanked Cornyn for his support and emphasized Colombia's commitment to cooperate with neighboring countries as well as the U.S. He said the GOC and the Government of Guatemala - with the assistance of the Ambassador and General Craddock - recently opened a counternarcotics center in Guatemala City. The GoC also hosted a conference with Central American partners on joint efforts to combat narcotrafficking.

GoC SUCCESSES...

¶4. (C) Ospina said Colombian security forces prevented hundreds of tons of illicit drugs from reaching the world

market through interdiction and eradication efforts. Ospina said the GOC eradicated 30,000 hectares of coca by hand.

¶5. (C) Air Force Commander General Lesmez said Colombia was the only country in the region with an effective Air Bridge Denial (ABD) program. In spite of this success, he warned that movements of small aircraft, which are harder to interdict, had increased from Colombia to Venezuela. Navy Commander Admiral Soto said because of the effectiveness of the ABD program, the new interdiction challenge was at sea. In spite of the fact that the Navy interdicted over 300 tons of cocaine since 2000, Soto said the Navy only has the capability to interdict 30 percent of outgoing drugs.

¶6. (C) Army Commander General Montoya emphasized the importance of U.S.-supported counternarcotics brigades in aerial eradication. The Ambassador noted the dangerous nature of these operations, explaining that the U.S. had lost two pilots to Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) attacks against spray planes in 2003. Montoya added that the Army and police also protect 150 manual drug eradicators in one sites around Colombia.

...AND CHALLENGES

¶7. (C) Ospina described bilateral counternarcotics cooperation as excellent, but noted that it has been complicated at times by competition for scarce resources between the counter-terror and counter-drug efforts. He said that without U.S. support, the GOC would not be able to fight this multifaceted war and requested resources to increase interdiction efforts on land, air, and sea.

¶8. (C) Montoya said that where there was coca you would find the FARC. He stressed the difficulty of "fighting a war with rich terrorists" and added that the FARC's influence extends beyond Colombia. Vice Minister Eastman recently returned from Paraguay where he described the law enforcement and security situation as worrisome. He said a group that kidnapped and killed the daughter of a former Paraguayan president received training from the FARC.

ECUADOR AND VENEZUELA

¶9. (C) Ospina said regional counter-terror and counter-drug cooperation is imperative; however, political tensions sometimes hindered cooperation. Ospina worried about Ecuador's political instability, and said opposition to spraying near the border had become an important issue.

¶10. (C) Ospina said Venezuela had become a refuge for terrorists and narcotraffickers. Ospina said Chavez seemed more concerned about his political goals than corruption, crime, kidnappings, and drug trafficking in Venezuela. In addition, the GOC was concerned about Venezuela's arms build-up, especially the purchase of an estimated 100,000 new AK-47s. Ospina feared the old Ak-47s would end up in the hands of Colombia's illegal armed groups.
WOOD